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ABSTRACT

This speech addresses the issues related to the education of Hispanic females. For Hispanic females, school failure has meant the perpetuation of poverty, the paucity of role models and mentors for the next generation, and the perpetuation of limited and stereotypic places for them in society. Based on relevant research, an examination of educational structures and their impact on Hispanic American females is presented. A general profile of the educational experiences of Hispanic American women is presented, with emphasis on the power that language has in framing this experience. Organization structure factors are presented as the determinants of schools' poor retention rate and lack of instructional success with Hispanic American females. The following ways in which structure factors in kindergarten through twelfth grade may determine the quality of education are covered: (1) in the way resources of all types are allocated to students: differentially, uniformly, or not at all; (2) in the manner by which schools fulfill their functions; and (3) in the way school personnel accept their professional responsibilities. Examples of structural inequities are presented to demonstrate that institutional discriminatory practices result largely from institutional inequities. Structural factors in higher education are also discussed. A list of 17 references is included. (JS)

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TO SERVE HISPANIC AMERICAN FEMALE STUDENTS: CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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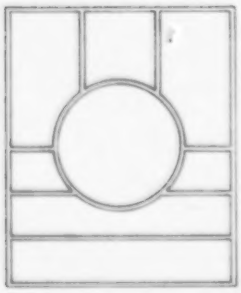

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MARI LUCI JARAMILLO

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by

Mari Luci Jaramillo

We are meeting today and tomorrow to address a very narrow, but nevertheless, urgent issue which not only affects women and Hispanas, but society as a whole. Why does it affect us and others? First, because Hispanic American females are a youthful and growing group. Second, because presently schools are the center of a spirited controversy about what should be done to improve the quality of instruction and educational outcome for students. However, what far too often goes unnoticed, therefore undiscussed and untended, is the reality that schools fail most dramatically with Hispanic American females. Third, as with any consequence of discrimination, the results impact upon both the lives of the individuals themselves as well as their future generations and ultimately the society as a whole. For example, some of the results of schools' failure to socialize and retain Hispanic American women in this country include:

* The perpetuation and feminization of poverty;

* The continued paucity of Hispanic American women as role models and mentors for younger generations;

* The perpetuation of limited and stereotypic places of women in society.

The result, though less obvious and slower to be realized, is just as great for American society as for the individual. For the special talents of a unique group of people are not allowed to materialize and thus do not contribute to the larger society. Finally, since institutions abound in all aspects of life, it behooves us to be concerned about the quality of participation that Hispanas experience in *ALL* institutions throughout their life span. And what more appropriate place to begin than educational institutions which are responsible for socializing individuals from a very early age and which hold the key for

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*This keynote address was delivered at The Symposium on The Educational Experience of Hispanic American Women which was sponsored by The Tomás Rivera Center, A National Institute for Policy Studies and held on October 20-21, 1985 at The Claremont Graduate School in Claremont, California.

advancement into other institutions where successful career outcomes are actualized. Therefore, our proposed examination of educational structures and their impact upon Hispanic American females over these two days is a timely and significant topic; one which highlights the need to know more about the effect of other institutions on the behavior of Hispanas.

In introducing the topic, I will first present a general profile regarding the educational experiences of Hispanic American women, and will draw attention to the power that language has in framing this reality. Second, I will present an organizational analysis in which structural factors are presented which are believed to affect the educational experience of Hispanic American women. This discussion will illustrate how structural inequities and discriminatory practices become one and the same phenomenon. In addition, I hope that these issues, along with the point I will make regarding the significance of language, will direct us to better and clearer research questions and policy discussions.

I must say that I find it intriguing that the literature on the educational experiences of Hispanic American women typically profiles the group in terms of high *dropout* rates and low *performance* levels, rather than of low *retention* rates and inadequate instructional *socialization* practices. A moment's reflection on the metaphoric distinction between the two sets of terms is revealing. The first set, along with such terms as access, attendance, and completion, places the burden of the educational experience upon the individual. The second set, aided by such terms as recruitment, admission, enrollment, and graduation, places the responsibility of the educational experience within the institutional setting. As Murray Edelman in his book *Political Language* says, "How the problem is named involves alternative scenarios, each with its own facts, values, judgments, and emotions."[1] This is never more true than in the case of Hispanic American women, where researchers, mostly Anglo males, have spent the past few decades naming Hispanic cultural norms and subsequent interpersonal and intrapsychic behaviors of the Hispana as the problems which prevent her from attaining academic success and encourage her to dropout of school. For example, *The New Mexican* of Santa Fe reported on a recent study sponsored by the National Council of La Raza on "completion" and "dropout" rates for Hispanic Americans. The newspaper concludes the following from the report: "Some of the factors that lead to such dismal statistics are low family income, undereducated parents, difficulty with English, and meager future expectations."[2] Where, I ask, is there recognition of the role institutions perform in the education of Hispanic Americans? I

suggest that as long as we condone the use of metaphors which conjure up a scenario of individual initiative and responsibility for educational failure, change for Hispanas will not occur. We must begin to acknowledge that the linguistic construction of *perception* is a *reality* -- one which blurs recognition of alternative possibilities. As such, I encourage us all to direct attention to "alternative possibilities" by becoming more precise in the language we choose to discuss the educational experience of Hispanas. I intend to try this today, to speak to you from a set of linguistic symbols which convey the responsibility which educational institutions must accept in assuring the educational success of Hispanic American females. I warn you, however, that this will be a difficult task. It requires, I find, a linguistic reframing of most, if not all, of the information concerning the educational experience of Hispanas. But we must challenge ourselves in this way in order to move forward in the appropriation of symbolically powerful metaphors with which to illustrate our objectives and/or purposes.

The profile of Hispanic American females in K-12th grades tends to be relatively consistent. School enrollment and retention rates decrease steadily over time as does the schools' level of instructional success. For example, in many American communities, over half of the Hispanic American children enrolled in elementary school will not graduate with a high school diploma. In some urban areas, the school retention rate is so low that only two out of ten Hispanic American children entering kindergarten will become high school graduates. Because of great variation in the way school districts collect and report information on retention rates, not to mention how they determine who to include in the count, estimates on school retention of Hispanic Americans range from 65 percent to 14 percent. By any standard, the proportion of Hispanic Americans who are retained in schools is unacceptably low and substantially less than the percentage of White and Black youth retained by the schools.[3] This lamentable situation is exacerbated when it is recognized that Hispanic American females fare the worst in the retention ratings. Studies consistently report male-female differentials of two to five percentage points.[4]

In the area of academic achievement, the schools' record with Hispanic Americans is somewhat less consistent. For example, reading performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress for nine year olds in 1980, although still below national levels, was significantly better than that of their nine year old counterparts in 1975. Within this age group of Hispanic Americans, significant gains were recorded for females, students in big cities, children in their modal grade,

and students who had at least one parent with some postsecondary education. A significant feature is that students in age-appropriate grade (grade four) performed as well as all nine year olds nationally. However, no significant gains were registered by 13 to 17 year old Hispanic American students over this time period.

Other studies show that by the end of third grade a downward trend in reading performance occurs for most Hispanic Americans. Somewhere between the 7th and 8th grade, Hispanic American students who enter college reverse this trend, while those who the schools fail to retain continue on at the same level. Significantly, some of those students who reverse the trend were participants in bilingual or Title 1 programs in elementary school.[5]

According to some researchers, 10 percent of Hispanic American students aged 13 to 18 years and 25 percent aged 14 to 20 years are enrolled two years or more below grade level.[6] Neither Black nor Anglo Americans experience near this amount of grade level delay. Nielsen and Fernandez in their analysis of the High School and Beyond data set found that sophomore Hispanic American males experienced more school delay, whereas in senior year it was Hispanic American females. Interestingly, using this same data, these researchers found that in the sophomore year, female Hispanic Americans out-performed males, but by the senior year Hispanic American males scored higher on the standardized achievement tests. Both males and females who are Cuban American and/or come from affluent families scored the highest, although it is important to note that the vast majority of *all* Hispanic Americans tested below the national average. Compare this with the following: on tests which measure ability, sophomores surveyed in High School and Beyond in 1980 and 1982 scored about the same as non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks.[7] This presents a disturbing mismatch between potential and school utilization of that potential. Nonetheless, it may help to illuminate why the schools fail to retain the majority of Hispanic American youth.

As for higher education, we seem to be in an era where some are experiencing appreciable gains in postsecondary enrollment, retention and graduation. For example, between 1979 and 1980, enrollment was up 5.7 percent among women, as compared to 3.3 percent among men. By fall 1980, women accounted for 51.5 percent of all students enrolled in institutions of higher education, up from 47.3 percent in 1976. Most importantly, increases in enrollment were found in all levels--undergraduate, graduate, first professional and unclassified. Within these levels, women realized the greatest rate of increase at the

first-professional level, up 12.1 percent in 1980 from 1979. Although in 1980 women comprised only 28.3 percent of the total in this category, their proportion of representation rose from 26.7 to 28.3 percent in only one year. The distribution of women across institutions of higher education is not quite so promising, however. Only 21 percent were found to be enrolled in universities, while 39 percent were enrolled in colleges and 40 percent in two year institutions.[8]

Unfortunately, information necessary for the presentation of a female Hispanic American profile is somewhat less available than for women or Hispanic Americans in general. However, de los Santos et al. reported that at the graduate level, Hispanic American females showed an increased enrollment of 11.9 percent from 1976 to 1978.[9]

What the increase in enrollment may be for Hispanic American females at lower level programs remains uncertain. Their major field of concentration for all levels, however, is known. For example, whereas in 1975-76 only 8 percent of White women receiving baccalaureate degrees were education majors, 24 percent were Hispanic American women. At the master's level in 1979, more than half of all women received their degrees in education. And at the doctorate level, education was still the major for over a third of Hispanic and White women. Hispanic Americans, like other minority students, are disproportionately concentrated in two year community colleges.[10] Extending the pattern for women in general, one would suppose that Hispanas are more frequently enrolled there than at universities and colleges.

In brief, while Hispanic American women have evidenced an increased rate of enrollment, retention and graduation in institutions of higher education, they remain underrepresented in proportion to their total population and confined within a narrow band of institutional and academic majors. What factors may account for this situation and the outcomes of students in K-12th grades are what concerns us next.

Several explanations can be offered to account for why the schools' retention rate and instructional success with Hispanic American females are so poor. As I stated previously, my intent today is to present organizational structural factors as the determinants of this situation. Structure can be defined as "the realities of the place in terms of time, space, and resources and the set of values, behavior and understanding that the participants share about those realities . . . e.g., staffing patterns, curriculum, institution funding sources, legal obligations, parental pressures and public obligation to an egalitarian

ideal."[11] We must be concerned with these factors in order to address the issue of educational experiences for Hispanic American females. These factors play a part because they may be allocated to students differentially, uniformly, or not at all. For example, Hispanic American females are likely to attend overcrowded schools with inadequate material resources.

Another way in which these factors play a part is in the manner by which schools fulfill their functions. For example, are schools designed to develop studenthood and instruct? If so, how do they go about fulfilling those functions? Or, stated another way, how do school personnel perceive the schools' function? Cusick found that school personnel perceived the basic issues in high schools as: race, discipline and attendance. For instance, administrators thought that deterring racial conflict among school participants was an important function. Teachers viewed race as a potential "powder keg"; that is, mixed races in their classrooms increased their personal stress and much of their concern in the school environs was related to racial composition, conflict, and safety. The second issue, discipline, was viewed as a major function of the schooling process in order to control the participants' behavior and in order to project an external image of stability. Cusick reported that the major proportion of material resources, personal energy and professional initiative was directed at maintaining discipline.

Finally, attendance was viewed as an issue of major importance to all school personnel. Administrators perceived the importance as a budgetary consideration. High school enrollments and attendance increased higher budget allocations. Teachers viewed attendance more ambivalently. They sought students they liked; they structured their classes to maximize certain student group attendance, and they appealed to individual student interests. The concern for attendance decreased the urgency for instruction. We see, then, that in response to the structural factors by perceiving school functions as centered around race, discipline and attendance, instruction and the development of studenthood did not take place in the institutions designed for those purposes. (See note 11.)

Another way in which structural factors may play a part is in the way the school personnel accept their professional responsibilities. For example, in dealing with Hispanic American females, teachers may relinquish their students; that is, pass them on to others, delegate them to pull-out programs or assign them to teacher aides. The research findings show how teachers differentially allocate the most precious resources to Hispanic American women students. They spend less time with them, they

interact infrequently and less positively with them, and deny them personal attention. Some examples of this differentiated allocation of teacher resources are: the heavy reliance of teachers on teacher aides, the practice of avoiding eye contact with Hispanic American female students, failure to acknowledge academic difficulties, and the appeal to students to attend and behave rather than instruct.

The examples presented suggest that organizations' responsibilities are relinquished. But more importantly, they suggest that structural factors, school functions and organizational relinquishment of responsibility are interrelated in the elementary and secondary school organizations.

In higher education we have other examples of institutional structural factors. For instance, Chacón et al. found that the type of campus attended by Hispanic American females was related to university success. When all of the socioeconomic and academic differences among the students at different campuses were held constant, students attending private universities were making much better progress, while those attending community colleges were making much slower progress.[12]

Among the specific structural factors leading to success were: 1) instructor evaluation of written work on student effort;[13] 2) minority staff, faculty and minority-oriented services;[14] 3) greater and better material resources at the university level[15] and 4) small student-faculty ratios and mentoring.[16]

These structural factors affect Hispanic American female university students differently than males. As was seen from the figures I presented previously, female Hispanic higher education students do better than males at the university level. Female success, however, is different from that of the males. Hispanic male university student participation is similar to that of other university students. In contrast, Hispanic female students participate in one of two ways. Some women may become social or political leaders on campus and/or the community. Their university student role is secondary. Their work is good enough for them to have a degree conferred upon them, but they are not academically inclined. The second group of women become "invisible" students. They perform academically at a very high level, but neither their peers nor the institution grants them acknowledgment.[17] For example, Ortiz reports how professors do not recognize or remember students' work without checking their written record in their grade books. These students are few in number, but they are the ones who pursue graduate and professional training.[18]

These adjustments to university life are conditioned by several structural factors. Ortiz reported how student advisement may be present in support services units but not in academic ones, or may be unavailable at critical times in a student's life. When support services assume primary responsibility for student advisement, students are likely to replace academic goals with social and political ones. One of the consequences of the absence of student advisement is that a longer period is required for degree acquisition. Thus, we have Hispanic American female students taking over four years to complete a bachelors degree.

By now, in listening to the many examples I have given on structural inequities, it must be obvious to you, as it is to me, that institutional discriminatory practices result largely from institutional inequities.

In conclusion, I'd like to return to my opening theme concerning the importance of our beginning to select and use precise metaphors in which to frame the reality of the educational experience of the Hispanic American woman. To accomplish this, I offer two different versions of the same research findings. As I read, I ask that you reflect on the implication of each version on the selection of future research questions and the formation of educational policy.

> VERSION ONE: Hispanic women are more likely to be dropouts than Hispanic men or women of other groups and the median number of school years completed by Hispanics aged 25 and older is 10.3 years, as compared to 11.9 years for Blacks and 12.5 years for Anglos.

> VERSION TWO: Educational institutions are more successful in retaining Hispanic high school males than Hispanic high school females and the median number of years which schools retain Hispanics aged twenty-five and older is 10.3 years, as compared to 11.9 years for Blacks and 12.5 years for Anglos.

The seminar we begin today is a forum in which we can evaluate past research, forge new studies and recommend future work. It is a time in which we can grapple with the reality of being female, Hispana and a student in our institutions of learning. We must understand in order to act; this is the first step.

Notes

1. M. Edelman, *Political Language: Words That Succeed and Policies That Fail* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 29.

2. *The New Mexican*, Santa Fe, N.Mex., 18 August 1985.

3. L.S. Orum, *Hispanic Dropouts: Community Responses* (Washington, D. C.: National Council of La Raza, 1984).

4. A. Vincent and L. S. Orum, *Selected Statistics on the Education of Hispanics*, Report no. 6 (Washington, D.C.: Hispanic Statistics Services, National Council of La Raza, 1984); R. W. Rumberger, "Dropping Out of High School: The Influence of Race, Sex and Family Background," *American Educational Research Journal* 20, no. 2 (1983): 199-220.

5. National Assessment of Educational Progress, *Reading and Mathematics Achievement in Public and Private Schools: Is There a Difference ?* (Denver, Colorado: Educational Commission of The States, June 1981). M. J. Hirano-Nakanishi and R. L. Diaz, *Differential Educational Attainment Among "At Risk" Youth: A Case Study of Language Minority Youth of Mexican Descent and Low Socioeconomic Status* (Los Alamitos, Calif.: National Center for Bilingual Research, 1982).

6. M. H. Gutierrez and B. Montalvo, "Puerto Rican Youth: Dropping Out and Delinquency" (Paper presented at the Annual Convention of The American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C., August 1982); F. Nielsen and R. M. Fernandez, *Achievement of Hispanic Students in American High Schools* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 1982).

7. National Commission on Secondary Education for Hispanics, *Make Something Happen: Hispanics and Urban High School Reform*, vols. 1 and 2 (New York: Hispanic Development Project, Inc., 1984).

8. G.H. Brown, N.L. Rosen, and S.T. Hill, *The Condition of Education for Hispanic Americans* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 1980); C.A. Ottinger, Comp., *Fact Book on Higher Education* (New York: McMillan Publishing Company, 1984).

9. A. de los Santos et al., *Chicano Students in Institutions of Higher Education: Access, Attrition and Achievement*,

vol. 1 (Austin, Tex.: Office for Advanced Research in Hispanic Education, College of Education, 1980).

10. Brown, Rosen, and Hill, *The Condition of Education*.

11. P.A. Cusick, *The Egalitarian Ideal and the American High School: Studies of Three Schools* (New York: Longman, 1983), 24.

12. M.A. Chacón et al., *Chicanas in Postsecondary Education* (Stanford, Calif.: Center for Research on Women, 1982).

13. Ibid. They determined that minority staff, faculty and minority-oriented services played a critical role in the success of immigrant or first generation, poorer, less educated families.

14. A.W. Astin, *Final Report of The Commission on the Higher Education of Minorities* (Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, 1982).

15. C. Preciado-Burciaga, "Special Concerns of Hispanic Women in Three Stages of Professional Development: Predoctoral, Early Postdoctoral and Intermediate Professional Years," (Unpublished paper, n.d.).

16. Astin, *Final Report*; J. E. Stahe, "Educational and Career Confidence and Motivation Among Female and Male Undergraduates," *American Educational Research Journal* 21, no. 3 (Fall, 1984): 565-578.

17. F.I. Ortiz, "The Recruitment and Retention Patterns of Hispanic American Women in College" (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada, 1983).

Mari Luci Jaramillo has a distinguished career in higher education. Currently, she is Vice President of the Educational Testing Service. Formerly she held the post of Vice-President of the University of New Mexico. Prior to this position, she served the Unviversity as Associate Dean, College of Education, and Special Assistant to the President. In addition, she worked as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs for the Department of the State, Washington, D.C., as well as held the position of American Ambassador to Tegucigalpa, Honduras in which she presided as Chief of Mission over six state agencies. Her areas of specialization include international diplomacy, teacher education, multicultural education, human resource development, curriculum development and minority education.

The Tomás Rivera Center

The Tomás Rivera Center is a national institute for policy studies that addresses issues affecting the quality of life of Mexican Americans and the larger Hispanic population of the United States. It is principally concerned with those social and institutional policies that determine the quality of education that Chicanos and Latinos receive and that influence their socioeconomic well-being in the United States.

The Center is named for and dedicated to the memory of one of its founders, the late Tomás Rivera (1935-1984), distinguished educator, prize-winning writer, and, at the time of his death, Chancellor of The University of California, Riverside. An independent institution governed by an elected Board of Trustees and an appointed President, The Tomás Rivera Center joins several institutes and centers already affiliated with and housed at the Claremont University Center and Graduate School in Claremont, California.

The Center began operations in January 1985 with the support of major grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and three California foundations: the Times Mirror, the William and Flora Hewlett, and the James Irvine Foundations. A Texas Office of the Center, affiliated with Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, is scheduled to begin operations in June of 1988.

Information concerning the Center and its programs can be obtained by writing The Tomás Rivera Center at 710 North College Avenue, Claremont, CA 91711-3921.

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